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THE PASSION FLOWER OF MAGDALA

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HEAD OF THE MAGDALENE

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*T*a time in the life of the world when the sun rose over the sea at the call of the piping nymphs, and the stars told fateful stories to man, a soul was created by the waters of Galilee. For a while it trembled on the rim of life, a new riddle propounded to the wise; for it might be as a stone over which the ceaseless tide of humanity would flow; or like unto a gem which would sparkle fair in the sight of men. Soon round about it bended the ministers of human life. Sight was there to paint for it the shifting lustre of earth and heaven. Scent hovered near by to bring to it the responses of the flowers. Touch quivered close at hand to teach the trick of great and dazzling deeds. And Sound took the seat of placid Silence and struck the first notes of music and of speech. And so the Soul stirred and hearkened to its ministers. Unto itself it gathered the spirit of the sun; and it was fed by vision and by song, by color of the skies and the perfume-bearing flowers, by wonders hid in drifting clouds, and marvels shrouded in the sea, by call of bird and flash of fading star. Then Beauty came and filled the Soul with ferment.



IT was a summer evening caught a-dream in the land of Galilee. The moon had risen, yellow, from her hiding place in the hills, and was filling the drowsy solitudes with amorous light. The night lay close to the earth, satiate with the languorous flowers.

On the edge of Magdala stood a house excepted from its neighbors by its more striking outline. Perhaps started and then abandoned by a Roman, it had been finished by a Hebrew. Standing high above the town, it lay pallid and chaste in the soft light of the moon. From its balcony could be seen the shimmer of the sea.

On the balcony were a man and a woman. The moonlight revealed a tall and sinewy soldier dressed in the Roman garb, yet was the face not Roman, but fair and fresh like that of a German. It was a face dangerously attractive, with grace to win and nerve to break the heart of woman — a countenance, one might say, conscious of its own beauty, with a mellow voice aware of its own charm. And the manner of the man was at once a caress and a sting.

As the woman reclined gracefully on a couch in one corner of the balcony, she seemed a panther calmed by the spirit of the night; for her ways were magnificently animal, and her grace was that of the desert. Her white and scarlet draperies edged with flowered embroidery clung passionately to a figure whose comeliness was a sort of intoxication of the senses. A silver girdle around the waist, and embellished sandals on the bare, pale feet, emphasized the languishing beauty of the woman, half revealed by the lamp of the night. Despite the neatness and exquisite elegance of her attire, despite the care with which her hair had been smoothed back from her pure and placid forehead and bound in a diadem, the eyes defied the restraints of fashion and were at times

filled with a light as dangerous as it was tender. Even in that semi-radiance, it was evident that there was warmth of color in her cheeks. A strange, wild face it was, but not a face of evil. It told in a subtle way of a fierce capacity to love, and to fight for her own. It was the face of one who might scorn all the conventions and trample even the sacred law under foot; yet was it compact with all the best traditions of the women of Israel, proud, beautiful, prophetic. Some of the sadness, some of the power, some of the inspiration, some of the cruelty of her people might be traced in the countenance of the beautiful woman who looked dreamily out into the heart of the night, while her lover spoke.

"I would thou wert going back with me to Rome," he was saying discontentedly.

"Thou knowest that cannot be, Segimund," she replied with some decision. "I must comply with the customs of my people. Our betrothal is yet to be announced, and the marriage cannot be hastened. Yet I fear to see thee go. I seem to be groping into the future, and I feel that this journey back to Rome means — alas! I cannot tell what. Shall I ever see thee again?"

"Banish thy fears, my Princess, and think not so seriously on life, but do as we Cheruskans do, let tomorrow take care of itself."

"I sometimes fancy when thou art away from me that thy love grows cold, and thy dear Rome hath so much more to enchant and delight than this bleak land of mine, that I am forgotten."

"Of a truth there are beautiful women in Rome, but none who can compare with thee."

"Dost thou think of me ever as I do of thee?"

"Canst thou doubt it?"

"Thou answerest my question with another."

"Thou shouldst not doubt, but if my thoughts did wander away from thee to someone —"

Her eyes gleamed like far-off bale-fires in the night.

"If I should learn to love someone else," he continued with a touch of playfulness in his voice.

"Then methinks I should kill thee and her," she said fiercely. "For I love thee, Segimund, with a power that balks my will. It seems to me that my life has been driving intensely towards one object, that its fire has burned its way irresistibly towards a single point, and when I turn my eyes upward there is but one star in the sky. With the cruelty of Death and the softness of Night I have learned to love thee. If thou shouldst ever falter in loving me, I fear I should be thy destruction."

"Why speak so savagely?" he said with rising impatience. "Thou art always struggling with visions of the night."

"Tell me," she said with swift directness, "what takes thee to Rome?"

"It is the war with the Germans. Arminius is making a fight for freedom, and he has brushed the Romans almost entirely from his country."

"And thou art summoned by the Emperor to wage war against thy kinsmen?"

"Yes."

"And thou wilt obey him?"

"What wouldst thou have?" said Segimund impatiently. "I have served for many years in the Roman legions. Rome has been my teacher and I owe her much."

"Cease, I pray thee," she said haughtily. "I do not understand thee at all. If thou hast any idea of fighting against the brave Arminius, banish it, I adjure thee, the moment thou enterest Rome. If thou lovest me, and hast any regard for honor, thou wilt make thy way to the German forests and do battle for thy country."

Segimund remained for a while in sullen silence. Evidently it irked him to have his duty pointed out to him by a woman who knew naught of war. Finally he said, as if the conviction had just seized him, "Thou are right. Thy

words have made all things clear to me. I am a German, not a Roman, and my place is in the forest."

Her savage mood relented at once to one of tenderness, and giving him an impulsive caress, she arose to prepare for him the evening repast. As she disappeared into a passage leading to a court, Segimund gazed with keen dissatisfaction in the direction of the town, which lay seemingly in a mist of white fire. He loved Mary of Magdala, yet her passion oppressed him. It was so wild, so imperative, so jealous, that it lay heavily upon a spirit that shifted with every breeze.

Nature had filled the heart of Mary Magdalene with a love that burned, but while this passion was grounded on the earth, it grew by flowers of radiant beauty and was fondled by the softest and most sensuous airs that blew. It was the highest, the frankest resultant of the senses, candid as the love of the tigress for her mate. But as the unconscious river makes music in its flowing to the sea; as the unthinking lily spills unawares its perfume on the wind; and as those tiny architects, the seeds, without the pain of thought, build from earth and air and stream their 'wondering domes of beauty and of strength, so was the love of Mary for Segimund a passion without a star.

Segimund was startled from his reverie by the noise of a rustling garment, and looking around quickly, a soft and pleasing apparition stood at his side. It was Esther, the sister of Mary, and her opposite. She had a mingled air of diffidence and coquetry, and she was beautiful in a way that plays havoc with the hearts of men. In her robe of white she breathed a compelling charm that sensuous summer night, and some malignant demon in the heart of Segimund was responsive to the soft challenge of her presence. A temptation then and there fell upon him, and would not be put aside.

"By the gods, Esther," he said significantly, "but thou art beautiful."

She drew back a bit disdainfully as she replied: "But not so fair as she."

"Come, my pretty one, thou must not be jealous of thy sister's beauty. Yet, as I look at thee in this magical light, thou art as fair as she."

"The magical light, forsooth! And do Germans consider that a compliment to a woman?"

"Thou dost forget, Esther. Have I not told thee before that thou wert beautiful? Yet thou art ever so modest and demure of mien that thou hast always offered an apology as it were for thy beauty. Tonight thou comest as a dream, stirring me so wondrously that I am bereft of my will."

With a quick movement he threw an arm around her slender waist and kissed her. She drew away shivering, her breath coming and going like the sigh of a flower, her eyes alternately displaying anger and surrender, disdain and joy. At last she broke the silence, the words fluttering from her lips like frightened birds: "What would she say?"

He laughed an unpleasant laugh as he replied: "She would have a great deal to say, did she but know. Of a truth, she has said too much already."

"Does she frighten thee?"

"Hardly that, but she makes me uncomfortable at times."

"And is that what thou callst love?"

"Thou askest a quaint question, Esther. For some days I have doubted it. Tonight I know that it is not. One kiss upon thy lips has solved for me the riddle of the Sphinx. 'Tis thou whom I love."

There was a strange, a fateful earnestness about his speech as he said this, and neither could guess the disastrous Fortune they both were tempting. The fair phantom of a woman stood, a breathing silence, enmeshed in his words; then half-heartedly, yet with invitation in her voice, she said: "What idle words are these, Segimund?"

"Put me to any proof thou wilt," he answered promptly.

Then the spirit in her slender form seemed to rise triumphant and resolute. With quick decision, she asked, "When dost thou leave for Rome?"

"It was my intention to leave some three days hence
There is a caravan departing tonight, and another —"

"Go thou at once, and I will meet thee at the point where
the caravan starts. Do not stop to think, but depart at once.
Our marriage can be bound at Tiberias, Rome, or where thou
wiltst."

There was a ring of resolution in her voice and love that
caught his wayward fancy.

"By the gods, Esther, thou hast the spirit of a nymph. I
will go; but do thou come at once and meet me at the end
of yonder grove of palms to the right."

Both seemed to be moved by some capricious impulse be-
yond their control. He leaped softly from the balcony to
the ground, and was almost immediately lost to sight in the
grove. Esther gazed after him a moment, then disappeared
into the house; and shortly afterwards a figure wrapped in a
sombre gown was flitting towards the point where the soldier
had disappeared.

A faint breeze stirred the palm trees fringing the blue and
white terraces of Magdala. The houses of the town shone
like ghastly sepulchres in the moonlight. The languorous
perfumes of the flowers breathed heavily on the night wind,
and Mary returned, bearing in her own hands the charger
containing the repast of her lover.

The moonlight fell, pitiless, in the empty corner where she
had left him, and her voice calling "Segimund" was given
back to her by the silence of the night.

For some moments she gazed out wistfully towards the
sea, and her voice seemed to her like a pain penetrating the
placid distances in search of his answering voice. Then a
strange coldness rived her through and through like a sword.
The air of the slumberous evening became a suffocation.
She stretched her hands emptily toward the sea, her arms
fell despairingly to her side, and with absolute prescience she
felt that Segimund would never come back to her.



ND this Soul waxed in splendor and in grace, seemingly fulfilling its appointed end; yet not so, for it was fated to be nor stone nor gem, but a lamp beckoning to the generations of man. First Passion came and threw a shadow across its pellucid visage, troubling it as some nameless power awakes the sleeping terror of the sea. And the shadow sometimes took a shining shape, which, grasped, dissolved in darkness once again. Day by day the Soul was buffeted from joy that was almost pain to pain that was not quite joy. Thus Passion sported with the Beauty of the Soul, and Doubt awoke, and ever smiling Hope. At last the shadow lifted, and with it went its shining double. Then Vengeance came and bound the Soul in chains. For it there was no longer laughter in the running of the rivers. For it the singing joy of life had ceased, and the glory of the heavens had shrunk like a leaf of the Autumn.

II

HAVING left her house in the care of an old servitor, Mary Magdalene vanished from the life of the little town on the shores of the sea. When she discovered that her sister as well as her lover had left Magdala, she at once divined the truth, and her blood burned to follow them. She longed to stand before their face and shatter the suspended vessel that held their stolen joy. This thought took hold of her to the exclusion of all others, snapping the ties of kinship and ignoring the opinion of all who thought well of her. Her deceiving had made her mad. The woman in her was in abeyance, and the animal heart, urged onward by a savage mania, became the directing agency.

Several weary days of travel brought her to Sidon, seeking passage in a ship bound for the West. When for the first time her strained eyesight fell upon that inland sea with the gaudy vessels skimming its fiery surface, a single doubt as to the virtue of her task penetrated her like a sharp pain. What was she prepared to do? Was it crime that she contemplated, or should she stand before them simply as a rebuking Nemesis? She could not answer either question, for she knew that she would be the victim of an impulse when at last she stood in their presence. There was in her wayward heart, moreover, a longing to turn backwards to the peaceful home by the grove of palms, instead of breasting that dread and fiery sea which seemed ready to take her to strange and cruel lands beyonds its face. As she stood near the harbor, rended by contending passions, a Phœnician ship of many glaring hues was preparing for departure. If she would make the most of her purpose, she had no time to lose. It was from this very port, perhaps, that her lover and her sister had fled. The thought put a new fire in her burning blood. It swept over her like a resistless flame, in which

for a moment consciousness reeled. Then her will stood firm, and she forthwith sought the master of the ship, and secured her passagè. She had taken her fate in her hands.

The first few hours at sea brought to her a certain exhilaration, from which she passed into a dreamy mood. The sunshine fell mercilessly upon the ship and turned the sea to yellow fire. Over the glassy waters they drifted betimes, and then, like some wild sea-bird, farther flew from home. The rude oarsmen, the savage officers, the frequent imprecations, and that burning heat, made of the voyage a hideous phantasm.

She wondered plaintively if the evening would ever come and cool the fever of the sea. She could feel the fire mounting to her head. All the glare from the sea, all the heat from the sun found focus in her brain. Night came at last and fanned with its cooling breath the sting in her cheeks, but she lay upon the deck delirious, beyond its refreshing help.

Hour after hour they sped over the sea, and she was in the grasp of that madness. Such rude help as could be given her was given cheerily, but it was of little avail. Parched with thirst and with every vein aflame, and her brain burning with fantastic visions, she lay writhing and murmuring in the ship as they bore for the Island of Rhodes.

One evening as the sun was setting and her fixed eyes gazed blankly over the steaming sea, a cool air came like the footsteps of soft music over the waters, and the Western sky reddened as if it were burning up with a passion of color. Then through that luminous atmosphere came to her conscious eyes the scarlet outlines of a city, the fairest she had ever seen. It might have been the city of the sun, for its majestic palaces towering into the sky seemed a part of the vaporous splendor, and in the background were rolling blue mountains and streams that tumbled down their sides, threads of silver fire in the revealing light. The vision filled her with wonder, and then with a certain peace in her heart she fell back upon the couch unconscious.

It was not a vision but the fair city of Rhodes that she saw; and at the set of sun the ship came into harbor.

When the vessel put into port there was the usual curious crowd ready to welcome her. This included some of the better classes, men and women, who had come down to the shore to learn what was transpiring in the East, or to drive such bargains for Phœnician stuffs as the gods permitted. The master of the ship brought forth many choice samples of Eastern workmanship for the inspection of the dames of Rhodes, over which they did chatter most enchantingly, while men and boys looked on with amusing wonder.

At length there was a cessation of the musical exclamations of delight or derision. Four sailors were seen bearing from the ship a litter, about which the crowd gathered with excited interest. At some distance from this point of animated attention, a young man pacing meditatively up and down, and contemplating the sea, was arrested in his walk. Philosophy is no proof against curiosity, and so the young man, who was a philosopher, walked over to learn the cause of the excitement. The crowd fell back deferentially as he approached, for he was known as one of the most learned doctors of the city. An exclamation of astonishment broke from his lips at what he saw. There upon the litter lay the most beautiful woman his eyes had ever chanced upon. Apparently she was asleep, but the roses of fever in her cheeks, the languor in her body, the limp arm that hung, beautiful as a dream, over the side of the litter, proved to his expert perception that she was rapidly nearing the portals of Death. Never before had he felt the same sensation that he now experienced as he saw that peerless beauty, helpless and unfriended, lying there for the rabble to devour with its eyes. Making his way quickly to the master of the ship, he asked who she was and why she was thus carried about for the idle fellows of Rhodes to gaze upon.

The master explained that he knew little or nothing about her. She had fallen ill of a fever on the ship and had been

sick throughout the voyage. If she continued with them to Rome, she would surely die.

"What dost thou propose shall be done with her?" asked the young man with a faltering voice.

"It is not for me to say," responded the master of the ship. "I thought perchance someone might have compassion on her and take her where she would be cared for."

"Then," said the Philosopher quickly, "I will see that she is cared for. I am a doctor, and if thou wilt place her in my charge all that the skill of the wise men can do to save her shall be done."

This was entirely acceptable to the master of the ship. The beautiful Jewish maiden had been a sore trial to him, and he was glad to have done with her. Arrangements were therefore quickly made and the sailors were engaged to carry the litter to the villa of the young Rhodian, Karminos.

* * * * *

When Mary awoke, the richness of her surroundings was so new to her that she thought herself in a dream. Never before had she lain on such splendid cushions, nor had her drowsy eyes ever opened to look upon such rich ornaments, or beheld such a profusion of beautiful figures upon the walls. There were paintings and statuary such as she had never seen the like of, and for a time she lay still and looked upon the wonders as a pleased, unquestioning child.

Hers had been a stubborn case, but the wise men had triumphed; or rather, be it said, the tender watchfulness of one had drawn her back from Death's black temple. Every day had Karminos hovered over the couch upon which lay the lovely Jewess wrestling with the fever demon. His mother had seconded all his efforts; and at last peace came to the troubled flesh. When consciousness returned to her Mary wondered what had happened, and tried to piece together the incidents of the past; but the serenity that prevailed in the palace, the soft atmosphere of luxury, the evidences of kindness and solicitude about her, nursed her

into a sort of drowsy indifference to what had gone before and what would come thereafter. Now that she had regained consciousness, Karminos held aloof, leaving her entirely to the care of his mother and the slaves. Occasionally her dreamy eyes wandered towards the windows, and through them she saw the spirit-like outline of hills so far away that they might have been the passing clouds of illusion. At times the soft ghost-like notes of songs stole through the chamber from invisible melodists. And so strength came back and with it a growing wish to know what it all portended.

One day she was strong enough to sit upon the balcony, and a slave woman helped her to a couch so arranged that she could look out upon her surroundings. The balcony upon which she lay was part of one of the palaces built on the hill-side overlooking the great sea. The morning light was just breaking, and the rosy fingers of the dawn grasped the snow on the mountain peaks, while a shadowy crimson was massed about the outlines of the hills. The white town at her feet was now a rare pink flower unfolding its glory for the kiss of the sun; and the sea itself, calm as the passionless skies above, stretched far away into the unmarred happiness of a dream. An infinite peace hovered on invisible wings over the stateliness of the city. The palm trees reared their heads in the air motionless; and the distant sea seemed painted on a field of moveless blue. Ere long the sun arose like a dazzling shield above the horizon, and the rose color faded fast before his golden coming.

It was then that they told Mary piecemeal the story of her being brought to the villa by the philosopher, who was deeply interested in her case. From all this she got the idea that Karminos was some enthusiastic grey-beard who had felt merely a scientific curiosity about her.

At last the time came when she should meet her benefactor. It was evening and the moon shone lovingly upon that fair island which legend says was drawn by the sun from

the sea. Mary sat on the portico overlooking the expanse of water. She was listening to the mournful music of the rising breakers as they wished upon the shore. She felt the storm of the sea and the peace of the night; and while in this mood the aged woman with the kindly face who had flitted through her semi-consciousness came to her, bringing a young man. Mary was deeply astonished to find how far her conception of her benefactor had strayed from the fact; and her confusion grew as she took in the details of his personality. He was not only young, he was handsome in a measure, and there was in his face a passionless purity which Mary had seldom seen in the countenance of man. She was startled as she began to go over the motives that had impelled him to bring her to his own villa, and to place her in the care of his mother. She had no fear of harm, once having looked in his face, nor was she moved at his presence as she was stirred by the proximity of Segimund. His eyes contained no guile, emitted no harmful intent, and seemed to tell of a beautiful philosophy. He appeared to her the love of wisdom incarnate.

The strangeness of the meeting made the hours of the evening pass with a certain fitfulness. There was much about herself that she did not care to divulge: there was much in his mode of life that could, he fancied, possess but little interest for her. And so, when Mary was taken back to her chamber, each felt a sense of dissatisfaction.

But as time passed and acquaintanceship ripened, the young philosopher and the Jewish maiden were attracted to each other by closer sympathies. He had learned from her only the partial truth that she had intended going to Rome to see her sister, and that was all he cared to know; and she was made aware of a life so new, so alien to her own past, that it made a strong appeal to her imagination. She breathed for the first time the atmosphere of sunny wisdom; she learned the history of the wise men who had taught the existence of a supreme intelligence, the immortality of the

soul and the atomic composition of the universe. She heard of that wise man who had drunk the hemlock because he taught the highest morality of his time. She was told of the philosopher who maintained that the soul is a number, of another who claimed that water was the beginning of all things, and of another still who traced the foundation of all things back to a fire. She learned that her soul might be an emanation from the Primitive Light or it might have borne many forms before it assumed the one in which it then was garbed, and that the visible world was an illusion. And though there seemed no end of the quest that Karminos placed before her, she knew the entrancing charm of seeking for truth and beauty; and moreover, in the palpitant summer nights, the young philosopher opened up to her the wondrous Greek world with its poetry, its tragedy and its dying eloquence. In her own tongue, for Karminos was skilled therein, she heard for the first time of that fair Helen, whose beauty ensnared Troy to its destruction; and she listened enwrapped to the story of Ulysses' wanderings. Wonderful, beautiful was the old Greek romance to this child of the desert land. Night after night her love for the beautiful grew as she sat an excited listener to the stories that can never die. And under this new spell the painful past was loosening its hold upon her.

As she grew stronger she loved to wander by the wheat fields and see the golden grain breathing gently with the wind. Under the blossoming carob trees or where the orange and the pomegranate shed their perfume on the air she spent many a pleasing hour; and in the glens she listened to the lispings lapping music of the water-falls. Wearying of this she might seek the belt of pines and fill her lungs with their balsamic fragrance; and then from all these she could turn to the sea, which had lost for her its terror.

It was in this paradise, this Island of Beatific, where roses made a couch of perfume for the senses, that she had first learned the pleasures of the spirit. And when evening came

upon that dreamy isle, she followed her guide, the young Karminos, through the quiet lanes and the shady retreats of philosophy.

And so to Mary of Magdala there came a new emotion. Once before the passion of love had stirred the virgin surface of her soul, and it had seemed to her that nothing could be so sweet, so beautiful; but the fire had been rudely quenched, and this individual human life felt the sway of a new spirit.

And there came a time when Karminos spoke to her of love, and she sat trembling upon the piazza that overlooked the sea, charmed yet affrighted by his words. His pale face was filled with suppressed excitement as he spoke. Was it the white fire of reason rather than the red glow of passion that burned there? She knew that she felt for this man a respect she had never entertained for any other, and she told him that.

"Thou art my ideal of honor and of wisdom, O Karminos, but I cannot be sure that I love thee. Yet would I die rather than do aught to pain thee. Could my death bring thee life, or honor, or happiness, I would willingly yield it up for thee."

"Why then dost thou doubt that this be love?" asked Karminos, bewildered.

"It seems to me that my soul should flutter like falling leaves when thou art near me, but it does not. Thy eloquence, thy wisdom, fascinate me as the moth is charmed by the light, but thou art to me rather a voice from afar, something calling to me from the skies."

"This is indeed love, Mary, though thou knowest it not," said Karminos gently, "and I am sure that thou art the complement of my soul."

"I will not deceive thee, Karminos. I have told thee of my doubt, yet thou hast brought me more peace than I have ever known. Thou hast led me into a new and beautiful land, and I can never repay thee. So if thou art content with me, knowing my doubts, then will I be thy wife."

And in this wise was their troth plighted.

* * * * *

One evening Mary walked beside the sea in the deepening twilight. Her heart was filled with nameless fears of ill. She was turning over in her mind the doubt that had so often assailed her and was asking herself whether she did love Karminos, or whether it was the spirit of wisdom that spoke through him. He had drawn for her a widened horizon, and taken the veil from the face of a new delight. But as she revolved the central doubt in her mind, an icy hand often seemed to grasp her heart, and an insistent voice told her that her love was incomplete. Segimund had been a warm, breathing animal. Beside him Karminos seemed a statue on which a cold light shone. Yet had she known no man in whom she had the same sweet faith as in this young doctor.

The moonlight brightened in the darkening night. The waves broke upon the shore with the sound of eternity in their melancholy cadence. From the cold depths of the sea awful voices were surely calling through the dolorous tumult of the billows. Mary was smitten with an indescribable horror.

She fancied that the white crests that trembled in the moonlight were the bodies of the dead dissolving and reforming, and she could not put this idea away from her. The mournful song of some home-faring fisherman came over the waves occasionally, and struck anew the melancholy chord in her breast.

Could she not flee back to the mansion, and in its light banish the phantoms that pursued her? No; she felt that she could not move. The sea held her in a spell. Karminos had not yet returned. He had been out for several hours in his boat, and it was strange that he had not yet put to land. She tried to throw off her depression and escape from the spell that bound her, but even as she did so, she fancied she saw an object coming towards her on the surging waves. She looked again and it had disappeared, but she felt that

the message of the sea was about to be delivered. In a kind of trance she stood waiting for she knew not what, powerless to move, trembling at the horror rising, falling, coming ever nearer, her veins like ice.

At last a long hoarse tumbling breaker rushed towards her like some fabled monster and seemed to open wide its heart, and there at her feet in the moonlight lay the dead body of the young philosopher.





THEN Knowledge came with pale revealing torch, and all the world was luminously white. And something dropped like cooling flakes of snow upon the disordered Soul, and shrived it of its pain. The Soul began a pensive pilgrimage. It passed among the hooded figures of the past, fared through sweet lanes steeped in peace, and art's majestic pleasure-houses. And whither it went, the music was ever soft and low, and the people were calm as phantoms of the dusk; and there were forms of perfect beauty without heat or dye. Yet there for a time, the hot fire being quenched, the Soul was at peace.

III



IGH in the Temple of Discord was hung the shield of Mars. The flash of glittering sword and glancing lance was caught in the sun. The day was filled with the pomp of triumph, and the wild war-song penetrated the starry night. The streets of Rome resounded with a myriad tributes to the God of the Crimson Quiver.

Mary Magdalene had parted reluctantly with the sorrowing mother of Karminos only when a reaction from the grief that beset her had come upon her, and destiny drove her from the peaceful island to the city of the Cæsars.

She reached Rome at a time when the heads of the people were filled with the prospective triumph of Germanicus Cæsar. A kinsman of hers, one Issachar the Silversmith, received her graciously, and she at once fell into the humor of the people. The talk was all of heroes. She quaffed it in with a new breath of delight. She listened with flushed cheeks to the story of Germanicus, the young warrior who had redeemed the Imperial arms and restored to Rome the lost eagles of Quintilius Varus. For years it had been the empire's shame that somewhere in the vast and terrible German forests the bones of her great army lay bleaching, while the barbarians held as trophies the symbols of Roman power. After many frantic combats and moving adventures, Germanicus had defeated the blue-eyed Vandals and restored the eagles to the Imperial City.

There was curious talk about the jealousy of Tiberius, for he had called the victor home in the full flush of his triumph, determined, so the rumor ran, to nip this bud of glory which bade fair to win the love of the people to his own hurt. And so Germanicus had been ordered to return to Rome and receive his triumph. Realizing the Emperor's jealousy, the people were inspired to accord the returning hero unusual

demonstrations of regard. It was while the light heads of the Roman populace were busy with these spiteful intentions, that the eyes of Mary Magdalene first beheld the magnificence of the Imperial City. Issachar, her kinsman, was an accomplished citizen of the world, who had put aside the god of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and was content to affect the indifference of the Roman to all save the outward spectacle of glory and power. His disbelief pervaded his household. His wife, a vivacious matron of a striking Semitic beauty, was as gay and soulless as any of the Roman dames, and their children were not brought up to remember the glorious traditions of Israel.

It was a period in the history of Rome when the people lived for the moment, sought surcease from vexatious doubts in the deep gratifications of the senses, and turned with eager, querulous excitement to every spectacle, every pleasure, every distraction that could spin a shadow over the light of conscience.

And now a fresh passion seized upon the heart of Mary Magdalene. She saw gay crowds of elegant idlers in the streets of Rome: she beheld the architectural glories of the dazzling city: she looked with a shuddering interest upon the mighty feats of strength in the amphitheatre: her eye reveled in the best art of the world. She found herself translated into a new realm of life and light and perfume. There was gaiety in all the streets; it flashed from the dark eyes of Roman beauties; it ascended in the summer night on the laughter of Sybaritic youths; it held mad revel in the comedies at the theatres; yet behind it all was that indefinable feeling of unseen but suffusive power which was at once the charm and the awe of Rome. Perhaps the madness in the air, the gay forgetfulness of the populace, the wild pursuit of pleasure, the utter indifference as to the morrow, intoxicated the soul of Mary Magdalene, sensitive as an aspen to vivid emotions. The barbaric splendor that illuminated the city must also have touched a fiery chord in her passionate nature; for by degrees the Roman life took such firm hold

of her that glory became the one thing worth living for. That wild love which Nature gave her had passed like a simoom before her face. The figure of prim philosophy was as lifeless to her as the marble statues that graced the capital. But Glory was worth the pain and the strife. To be the central figure for a day, even an hour, in this vast tumult of life, were worth the ransom of a king. On every corner stood monuments to men who had seen the face of Fame. Those stately palaces, those temples gleaming with the triumphs of art, those arches proclaiming the valor of heroes living and dead, all did homage to the spirit of transcendent War. And so the storm of it blew through her soul, and as she listened to its wild and thrilling music, she felt arising within her a new longing that her name might be, though never so momentarily, on the lips of this admiring people.

But Germanicus was not to be the sole object of interest in the coming triumph. The people had their own heroes, and the ballad-makers had wrought songs of many valiant deeds. One minstrel chanted the praises of the warrior who had taken the ensign of Arminius; another sang of the capture of a blue-eyed princess; but most popular of all was he who sang the story of Evander the brave Centurion. It was a song that Mary Magdalene heard one evening in the Forum, and it had filled her with ardent visions. So dramatic was the bard who told this story to the enraptured crowds, that Evander's coming was anticipated with almost as much enthusiasm as that of Germanicus. From the countless exploits of that indomitable army the feat of Evander had made his name famous throughout the Roman world, for he it was who had wrenched from the wild German the last eagle which Varus had left in the Teutoberg forest—he was the soldier who had brought back the precious symbol to his general.

It was somewhat in this vein that the bard told the story:

It was night in the dread German forest, when Evander left the Roman camp with orders from his general to learn

the disposition of the German forces. The stars gathered fast as he entered the gloom, and began the journey through miry glen and clotted marsh. A silence profound and death-like enwrapped the forest, and for a time the darkness knew no light save that of the tremulous stars. But as the night advanced, the moon arose and made a turquoise light in the far off aisles. With steady heart he kept his painful way, harried by the brush and the twisted thorny shrubs, assailed by the stench of the fens, and dragged back by the drifts of foul dead weeds. Betimes he caught the smell of driven smoke from the camp-fires miles away, and fancied he could hear the flying songs of the birds in the lonely groves, sounding weird and terrible in those doleful solitudes. With heart that did not droop he pressed ahead until he reached the Long Bridge, now rotting and insecure, that spanned the stream severing the fens, made his way across and entered once again the protecting gloom of the forest.

The night far advanced, Evander came to the Field of Death. A swarm of fetid odors prepared him for the heaped-up horrors. With eyeballs fixed he staggered into an open space, the last rendezvous of the Army that Never Came Back. Here he beheld rude altars linked with the skeletons of the Roman tribunes. On the trees that formed an amphitheatre around him were fastened hundreds of grinning skulls that mocked him as he paused there alone, the moonlight falling on his glittering helmet. It was not wise in him to stand thus in the open, yet he could not choose but cast a mournful glance over the ground. Here were heaps of skeletons piled high inextricably by War's frightful hand: yonder a slimy ditch half filled with bones and broken javelins: while on top of the ruined rampart lay a chain of twisted skeletons tracing the story of Roman defeat. Evander shuddered as he gazed, for it was in this awful place, embosomed in the spawns of Death, surrounded by damp and deadly lonelines, that the eagles of Varus had been taken and disgrace had come upon the Roman arms.

Evander stood wrathfully contemplating the scene, and with the sense of being encompassed by fearful dangers. Suddenly his eye caught the glint of something shining in the air, and a rude shock in the head told him that a javelin from an unseen foe had struck the top of his helmet. The warrior in him leaped up at once, and it was well; for coming towards him was a stalwart German, evidently a scout like himself, who had seen the Centurion surveying the remains of Rome's great army. In that lone place they quickly fell upon each other, their clanging swords ringing out a horrid music in the night. There was the hurried flash of arms in the light, the stout advance and the reluctant breaking away, but ere many moments had elapsed Evander had hacked his foe into insensibility, if not death. And now he felt that there were need of all his caution. Other scouts might be wandering around, and the noise of the combat might have reached them. He quickly threw his helmet away, and donned the skin robe of the German; then with the captured osier shield and sword of his dead foe, he stole away towards the distant twinkling lights.

The comrades of Arminius were holding a brave carousal that night by the light of flickering torches. They were gathered about the banquet tables while their bards chanted the songs of victory. Their savage shouts filled the gloomy groves with terror; and they were far too intent on their revel to detect the stealthy approach of Evander, even had they been on guard.

The Centurion found himself near a beautiful grove, in the centre of which was an altar. As he beheld the object that crowned the altar, he trembled in every limb, as one who was smitten with palsy, and crouched to the ground, so fearful was he then of being seen. He was harried with joy, rage and staggering excitement. He was as one who grasps at a priceless treasure in his dreams; for there before him was an object that meant glory, and to possess which were worth any man's life—a jewel more valued than rubies or the gems that

glittered on the neck of an empress. For the figure defined by the light was the last of the lost eagles, set there by the swaggering Germans as an object of worship.

The grove was silent and empty. There brooded the ghosts of the sainted heroes. There a fell superstition held its bloody rites. But it had no terrors for Evander. Why should he not steal in and carry off the eagle boldly? He thought of the fame that would be his, if he could achieve his purpose, and he paused to take counsel of his prudence. Even as he meditated the action, he observed a procession of white-robed priests with a milk-white horse approaching the grove. To his dismay they made ready to enter it, and consult the omens. Fastening the beautiful horse to a post just at the rim of the grove they began their observation of the mystic rites.

Baffled by a flock of screaming priests? No; by the splendor of Rome! this was too much for the Centurion's hot blood. His spirit sped forward like a shooting star, and he acted at once. Drawing around him the animal skin which he had taken from the dead German, he walked straight up to the altar, clasped the precious eagle in his arms, and then with drawn sword he confronted the panic-stricken priests. Mechanically they surrounded him to bar his exit, but he scattered them as if they were chaff, and now there was thorny danger ahead. The commotion in the sacred grove would soon attract the revelers from their cups, and he would be surrounded and slain, or pursued to death through the terrible fens. But the religious traditions of the German grove had no claim on him. They fettered not his reckless spirit. Yonder gleamed the sacred white horse, a peerless animal. What recked he of its power of divination or its sacred character? To him it was the symbol of escape, the means of undying fame. With his sword he cut the tether, leaped upon the animal's back, and with a pack of wailing priests behind, clattered from the grove like a flying satyr.

Then of a sudden a light seemed to break in upon the

revelers. There was a call for horses, the clangor of collecting arms, the fierce howl of pursuit. The white horse sped past the camp in the topaz light of the moon, and then the frenzied pursuit began. Wild and awful were the yells that rent the silence of the night, but with a fearful joy in his heart, on and away fled the daring Roman. Now he toiled through marsh and stench, soiling the purity of his noble steed; anon he cantered away over a reach of dry land, and laughed when his pursuers splashed and mired in the mire he had left behind him. Through the black shadows he raced like a streaking ghost, still followed by a chorus of unearthly cries. Then he came to a stretch of swampy ground, where the mud was a drag upon the spirit of the white courser; and now the avengers were crowding fast in his rear, for they were at home, and every foot of that weird region was known to them. Far ahead of him he caught the gleam of the Long Bridge, and the race shot for that point. If his pursuers reached it close upon him, he was lost; and he too would die in the forest, a vain suitor for the lost eagle.

He heard the hiss of the awakened serpents in his path, and ever and anon the glazed eyeballs of wild animals shone like fires of death upon him as he swung onward through the forest. At last he was within reach of the bridge, and a fierce cry of exultation escaped him when the hoofs of his horse first struck, hard and ringing, upon the wooden way. The Germans were now in full view. He turned and saw the tips of their lances moving like fireflies in the forest behind him.

The bridge was old and uncertain. It wavered with the wild rider who was plunging across it. His horse became panic-stricken and checked its gait. The bridge had been rocking to the stormy motion, and the horse and it were out of harmony. Evander felt the blood freezing in his veins, for his pursuers were coming on like huntsmen certain of their prey.

Only a hundred feet or more, and he would be over the treacherous bridge, but before he could reach the bank, there

was a shudder throughout its length, and it gave way gently, dipping the horse and rider into the stream, just as the Germans came to the other shore.

There was a howl of triumph from the pursuers; checked, however, as soon as they perceived that both horse and rider were swimming for the opposite bank. Their exultation gave way to rage, for they saw that the Roman held in one hand above the water, as a taunt to them, the precious eagle. A number of them plunged with their horses into the stream, and just as Evander and the white horse reached the bank, a cloud of frams was sent after him.

Evander mounted the horse, which made no attempt to escape from him, and they were soon moving away like a flash of light towards the Roman camp. In his excitement he did not notice for some time that he had been wounded; but as he rocked along through the chill damp air, the sting of his wounds became very acute. He felt himself growing fainter and fainter, and the yells behind him were redoubled in fury; but he hugged the eagle to his heart as if it had been a child. He spoke tender and incoherent words to his horse. Still he flashed onward through the shadows that seemed to gather about him and then reel away like bewildered spirits in the moonlight; until at last his eyes beheld the pale green fires of the Roman bivouac beyond the forest.

He did not know that the Germans had given up the pursuit; their wild cries had died out, but they still echoed in his frenzied head, multiplied by the fever that held him, and so he rode at full tilt into the Roman camp, making mad confusion there, and he never stopped until he stood in front of the tent of Germanicus. The General, aroused by the alarums of the camp, was at the door of his tent as he approached.

"What means this tumult?" he asked peremptorily.

"It is I, Evander," said the Centurion thickly.

"Well, what hast thou for me?" impatiently asked the General.

The soldier tried to speak, but he dropped forward,

clutched at his horse and fell to earth. The General approached him and bent over him, while the white horse sniffed at him as if they were comrades of long standing.

"The last eagle, Imperator," whispered Evander, and fainted.

The General did not understand for a moment. He stood looking at the poor fellow as he lay there, smeared with blood, foul with the stench of the marsh, and soiled with mud; and a sense of disgust arose in him. Then his eyes fell on the object clutched in the grimy hand, and he knelt and kissed the pallid lips.





*T*HEN Glory came with eyes aflame, and wild locks waving free, came on her steed of fire. And the winds parted to let the storm-queen pass. Her radiant helmet shot through the air like a meteor, the wail of the rising tempest was heard in her track, and the vapors of the sky became gigantic carbuncles announcing her coming. And whither she went, men forgot the splendor of Life, and made of Death a mighty and glorious king. And a ray of the irresistible light from her sparkling shield pierced the Soul through and through.

IV



HE morning broke clear for the triumph of Germanicus. The streets were filled with gay people in holiday attire. Shops had been closed, and the artisans and their wives and children were hastening to the Sacred Way, where platforms had been raised for their accommodation. The temples were agape today, and the statues and monuments along the route of triumph were garlanded with flowers. The city was dazzling with its palpitant colors, moving past its white and golden beauty.

Among those who hastened with the eager throng to the Sacred Way were Issachar and his family and Mary Magdalene. Luckily they had bespoken a place on the steps of the Temple of Concord, not far from the Capitol, where all that was noteworthy in the procession could be seen.

Outside the city, in the Field of Mars, Germanicus formed his heroic cavalcade. Entering the city by the Gate of Triumph under the Capitoline Hill, the shining line crossed the Velabrum, the yellow Tiber gleaming to the right. Taking its way through the Circus Maximus, it wound along through the valley between the Palatine and the Cælian Hills. It skirted the rear end of the gorgeous home of Augustus, bent abruptly to the north, and gleamed in front of the palaces of the senators and the millionaires of Rome. Thence its stately tread resounded in the narrow streets under gigantic tenement houses, from whose windows the starvelings of the city threw down their poor and withered flowers upon the conqueror. It then climbed the Velian Hill, from the top of which burst upon the eyes of the hero the magnificent spectacle of Jove's amber temple crowned with its plunging quadriga. And now the train moved with something of Assyrian pomp through all that was majestic and peerless in Rome — by the circular Temple of Vesta, beyond the shops

of the silversmiths, past the Temple of Castor, the bewildering basilica of Julius Cæsar and the carven statues and monuments of the Forum, beyond the rostra where the orators were wont to bend to their will the fierce democracy, on to the *clivus capitolinus* that girt the Temple of Saturn and reached over the frowning hill on which the icon of Jupiter stood in its golden state.

Along the route a host of splendors greeted the gaze of the victor. From every side radiated lines of marble columns of every color and from every clime. There were fluted pillars of Numidian stone, and columns of marble from the mysterious East and gloomy Africa; there were lofty porticos graced with silver statues and figures in bronze, ivory and gold; there were matchless peristyles topped with marble personages; there were bronze and silver Colossi that told the vanity of Augustus and preserved the memory of Cæsar; there were arcades of alabaster arches, and elaborate palaces proclaiming the wealth, the incrustated power, and the staggering greatness of Rome. There were gardens along the route of triumph from which a profusion of roses and violets tossed storms of perfume upon the passing procession, while scores of fountains made music in their splashing basins beneath solitary palms that lifted high in air their tufted heads. And finally beyond it all, set crown-like above the marble city, was the capitol, bursting with trophies raped from every clime, gleaming with art torn from the prone arms of Greece, sacred forsooth to Rome's relentless spoliation of the world.

As Mary Magdalene pressed onward through the crowd, she was bewildered at the multiform life that swirled about her. The whole city had fallen into revel. Gaunt artisans in borrowed bravery of festal attire could be seen greedily attacking the provisions spread upon the public tables. Now the pale face of some desolate woman in the crowd fixed Mary's attention for a moment by its look of artificial gaiety, and was then obliterated by the vision of a noble lady flashing by in her gown of emeralds and pearls. In the palaces

dissolute freedmen grown rich by thrifty sycophancy could sometimes be seen drinking their Setian or Chian wine from myrrhine cups and goblets of gold. In the streets were people of every nationality and every trade reputable and infamous. Flatterers clung to the train of the noble and the rich. Unctuous slaves and slaves of savage mien were revealed everywhere. Here stalked a brawny gladiator from Dacia with his retinue of howling admirers gathered from the fickle crowd. There strutted a pompous flamen or a dignified augur. Saucy buffoons walked side by side with the gay and picturesque priests, while long-bearded philosophers seemed hand in glove with Chaldean magicians and quacks from Greece. Now an Oriental dancer with jingling tambourine pirouetted in a circle cleared for her by the lively populace. Anon a loquacious crier with strident voice drew a crowd about him in the Forum, and endeavored to dispose of his worthless wares. Here a hungry citizen was hurrying to the public tables, and perhaps just behind him came a perfumed nobleman who later on would dine on peacocks' brains and tongues of nightingales. Spies of the Emperor and Jewish exorcisers, vagabond priests from Cybele and enervated youths from Antioch, sober clients and reckless debauchees crowned with sickening flowers, threaded in and out of the ever-shifting, changing pageant.

Mary Magdalene looked upon the surface of all this and saw that it was radiant and heroic. It seemed to her that these people had discovered the secret of life, that they had learned how to banish gloom and haunting sorrow, and lived only for the joy of living. She did not see the canker behind luxurious Pleasure, the restlessness that pursued vain shadows, the blank Despair that drove the chariot of empty Joy, the darkness that hovered over all the fury of color, nor could she foretell the silence that would swallow up all the noisy revelry.

And so it was with quickened pulse and a thrill of exalted feeling that she took her place far up on the steps of the

Temple of Concord, and waited the appearance of the triumphal cortège.

And certainly a more beautiful face could not have been found in all that multitude than that of the woman of Magdala. The sun had left a loving token of his warmth amid the roses on her cheeks. Her eyes were filled with unfathomable beauty; and the pantherish grace of the woman was emphasized by the richness of her gown, and the crimson scarf that was allowed to bind the splendor of her dark and rippling hair. She looked a passionate flower of the desert as she stood there waiting with eager eyes the coming of the hero.

At last a mysterious calm fell upon the populace, announcing the approach of the procession, and confirming the announcement came the daring notes of a trumpet soaring far into the limpid sky. In the distance could be heard the responsive shouts of the populace like gathering thunder.

The head of the procession was composed of the magistrates of the capital and the Roman senators. They passed by to give place to a brilliant company of mounted trumpeters who brought stirring music with them. Then followed the train of frames laden with spoils taken from the Germans, including arms and standards captured from Arminius. In this group there were representations of battles and towns, rivers and mountains in Germany, and many a banner with pompous legends borne by dusky slaves. At the head of the group rode a youthful warrior bedight in dazzling armor. The point of his lance gleamed in the sun like a star. His plumes nodded gracefully as he bent his crested head. Mary noticed that his face was bold and cold and free, with something of that nerveless rigidity of feature that marked the Roman Centurion. She could fancy that he would look Death in the face with eye that did not droop, with lips that faltered not. He was the incarnation of the youthful Mars. In one hand he bore an old and battered standard, and as he made his way through the multitude, the brazen din of applause was enough to arouse the dead legions of Quintilius Varus.

"Who is yonder Centurion that bears the ragged ensign?" asked Mary Magdalene, strangely moved.

"'Tis Evander," said Issachar, "and he carries with him the last of the lost eagles."

No wonder the heart of Mary glowed with heroic ecstasy at the sight of that proud young son of war; and in a trice she recalled the ballad of the bard in the Forum, and that fiery exploit in the gloomy forest took form again in her fancy.

The long train of spoils drifted on to the capitol, and a troop of flute-players making shrill but warlike music approached. Behind them came the sacrificing priests with the white oxen doomed for death.

The frenzy of applause far up the Sacred Way caused Mary to turn her eyes in that direction, and the cause of the tumult was apparent. The hero Germanicus, the victor of the day, was coming. And now her veins were on fire with eagerness, and the sunset roses burned like living flowers in the glorified beauty of her face. She felt herself swept away by the magic, the sublimity, the superbness of war. She had the sensation of a bird flying the infinite sky.

But while straining her eager eyes for a glimpse of the approaching hero, she failed to note that part of the procession now passing. Hitherto all had been magnificent, inspiring, joyful, and triumphant. This was the stately legend of war, this the meed of victory, this the music of heroic achievement.

Now as Mary looked ahead of her, taking up the train where her eyes had wandered from it, all the elation died in her heart, and she was smitten suddenly with horror. Who were those persons bound in golden chains who graced this festal occasion? Never before had she seen such despair inscribed on human faces. Some were young and beautiful, some were old and weary, some men, some women. Prominent among them was a young and beautiful woman whose attitude and face were indicative of absolute horror. What

was it she saw ahead of her that filled her eyes with dread? For a moment Mary was only confusedly impressed with the personality of the young woman, then a deeper wave of dread rushed over her; for it was Esther she saw before her in chains, the sister who had wronged her; and by her side was Segimund, soldier-like no more, but sullen and dejected. What did it all mean? Why this note of terror in the joyous and festal proceeding? With beating heart Mary framed the question, and Issachar carelessly answered: "Those are the reserved captives."

"Reserved?" said she with sinking heart, "reserved for what?"

"For death," said Issachar grimly.

"Death?" said Mary as one speaking in a dream. "Why should it be allowed to mar such a day as this?"

"That is a part of the triumph. These captives will be put to death in honor of the victory of Germanicus."

"When? Where?" asked Mary, now pale as a statue, a curious perplexing light in her eyes.

"Very shortly. Indeed, when the procession reaches the capitol, they will be led aside by the Knight Evander, who hath the honor of executing them, and they will be slain to the glory of Germanicus. But see! the hero approaches."

"Victory and death," murmured Mary unconsciously.

Nearer, nearer went the train of captives to the capitol, and Mary's heart almost ceased to beat. She longed to fly from that place, hurry to her sister's side, and take her to her breast before she died. She tried indeed to edge her way through the crowd. It was an impossible task. She was hemmed in. Even as she stood there, perhaps her sister and Segimund were being put to death. Curiously enough, her mind wandered back to the evening when she had last beheld him and had advised him to serve his country, and she also remembered that she had told him she would be his destruction if he should ever love another better than he did her. So he had taken her advice and her prophecy had come true.

It were some consolation after all to die a patriot rather than live a traitor. But Esther! She shrank almost into a state of unconsciousness at the horror of it. She went far back beyond the wrong that had been done her and thought only of the timid, fragile sister whom she had loved with the double love of mother and sister; and the cruelty of this splendid thing called war smote her with despair and utter helplessness. And this was glory, this was the most exalted passion in the world!

From that moment she saw no more of the stateliness of the pageant. The lictors with their wreathed faces came before the Caesar, but they were phantoms to the stricken Magdalene. The smiling Germanicus, dressed like the Capitoline Jove in embroidered toga and flowered tunic, passed before her eyes, but her soul was following those sad captives to their cruel death. The hero in his circular chariot with his four restive steeds, holding in his right hand a laurel bough and in his left an ivory sceptre pointed with an eagle head, and his brows wreathed with Delphic laurel, set the crowd wild with horrid clanging enthusiasm; but Mary could only think of the death that was his courier, and her eyes beheld only the death's symbol in the shape of a golden crown of Jupiter which a slave behind held over the hero's head. Little did she or anyone else in all that concourse think that in a few brief years the hero would pass with shriven honors to the shadow-land where the captives, who graced his triumph, had gone.

The procession travelled onward, and Mary Magdalene stood as one enclosed in an airless, encroaching tomb. Then something seemed to burst in her brain, and chaos fell upon the world.

A thousand demoniac noises were fighting in the air. The Temple of Jupiter swung before her like the weight on a pendulum. A myriad of dancing skeletons performed in the streets. There was blood upon the marble statues, and impending fire, death, and disease were above the city. The glittering line of triumph writhed like a wounded serpent.

The heavens were blotted out, the sunlight failed in midsky,
and Death was monarch of the world.

The triumph was at an end. Issachar turned to greet the
Magdalene; but she had gone, and he never saw her again.



THEN Night fell and through the blackness flew winged shapes of fire with colors changing momentarily, now beautiful, now terrible. The Seven Devils led the Soul to their obscene retreat, and there passion blazed and Love was not; there madness was and Beauty lost its torch; there reason fled afar, and the Soul wandered purposeless in bolted chambers.

IT was an afternoon in December. The air was filled with the balm of springtime. The groves about Magdala were green, and many flowers were in bloom. Slender bluebirds flitted from garden to garden, larks were dreamily skimming the heavens, turtle doves gossiped in the eaves of the houses, storks sauntered familiarly about like official inspectors, and the little brook turtles came out and warmed themselves in the sun.

Like a globe of fire the sun was poised upon the crests of the Western hills, and the Sea of Galilee lay in the tender swoon. In the town of Magdala there was an unusual stir, and the people were hurrying down to the sea. Quite a crowd had already gathered there, and all eyes were turned towards the East, as if they expected to behold some wonder emerge from the heart of the sea. Stately Sadducees and Roman scoffers, canting Pharisees and withered Scribes, beautiful mothers with babes in their arms, curious maidens with the dark beauty of the hill tribes in their faces, modest Hebrew girls, and not a few serious and exalted men, to whom the coming event, whatever it might be, was no idle or frivolous affair, might have been observed in the eager crowd gathered by the waters that tender gracious evening.

The valley was a goblet brimming over with liquid sunshine; and the face of the sea was an unspeakable glory, too dazzling for the eye to look upon. For awhile everything seemed dissolving in a golden mist: the town became more ethereal—the spirit of its noonday self; the outlines of the hills were lost in the glittering obscurity, when suddenly the insupportable radiance was tempered by the soft approach of crimson shadows. Then a tender purple light made its

way slowly over the face of the waters ; and at last, born apparently of that retreating glory, came a gossamer sail breasting the sea like a swan.

All eyes were fixed on the approaching sail : awe held each heart, silence each tongue, as if something beyond the common grasp of things were about to be. There was in the air a sweet premonition that the veil was about to be torn from the face of a Hope, long cherished but unseen. Many who stood by the shore of the beautiful sea were there, as already written, out of curiosity ; some were there to scoff ; some, perhaps, were ready to do violence.

But as the boat neared the shore, a hush was upon every idle tongue. In the prow of the boat was One whose glance was far away on the Western sky, or mayhap on some golden strand beyond its softened splendor. There was in his face a gentleness such as a mother wears while looking at the babe asleep near her heart : but at times a fire was in the clear blue eyes that bespoke the spirit of a man steadfast in high resolve. In him the tenderness of women seemed intertwined with the fearlessness of lions.

There was naught in his attire different from that of the plain people on the shore : his demeanor was composed and unassuming ; yet no one who looked upon his face once ever forgot it. To him who looked lovingly, the memory of it was as the light of a lamp guiding his faltering feet and illuminating his weary heart forever. To him who looked in hate, the memory was an ever-burning remorse.

When his comrades — simple fishermen — had fastened the boat to its moorings, he arose gently in his place to speak to the people on the shore. How divinely beautiful he was as the light of that ineffable evening streamed about him ! The skies were the tenderer for his coming : the listening palm trees by the water's edge were fixed upon a ground of conscious blue : only the sound of dripping oars could be heard at times as the other boats drew nigh that the boatmen might hearken to the mellow voice as its music drifted over

the listening sea. There were those in the assemblage who hated this beautiful teacher of the children of men; but as he stood there in the boat, armed with victorious purity and love, indifferent to angry looks, the turbulent souls felt a benign influence they could not resist. The curse refused to defile the Pharisee's lips: the storm was quelled in many a tempestuous heart, and a sweet peace, unbidden, entered.

And when he began to speak, that eager multitude upon the shore hung enchanted upon his words. The gentlest and the sweetest voice that ever fell on listening ears was speaking to them, bringing tidings new and wondrously glad to the famished and the broken heart. In the hushed, expectant air of evening, with the blue waves idly lapping the pebbles on the beach, and the shadows of twilight falling, dream-like, upon the sea, that voice became the voice of infinite love from the infinite azure above them.

Apart from the multitude gathered to hear the beautiful teacher was Mary of Magdala. Upon a broken pillar she sat, gazing with eyes that saw not at the tiny waves rippling at her feet. Her hair was no longer smooth and beautiful, but wild and unkempt. Her clothing was soiled and ragged, her feet bare, and her beautiful neck and bosom were cruelly lacerated. The face was pallid and drawn, and the dark eyes glittered with the seven deadly fires of animal madness. She sat there alone, unconscious of the multitude, unconscious of the glory in the sky and the peace that dreamed upon the hills. For a time the wildness slept in her weary brain, the fire was smouldering in her tired limbs.

Day and night, far and near had she wandered at the call of a purposeless impulse. Lands and seas had she crossed in search of a light that never came. By all the wells of Galilee had she dragged her forlorn and distorted spirit. Some had pitied her and helped her on her way. Some had laughed at her and even pelted her with stones. And so she wandered on like a lost river among the mountains, beautiful still but wild as the foaming cataract. And now she had come back

to Magdala, and some unaccountable influence had held her there.

But little heed was paid her by the multitude. Their thoughts were on the words of the Beautiful Teacher, and it was surely a wonderful story he told them — this story of a kingdom without a king, or a palace or a pleasure house; where there were neither temples nor tabernacles, where the sound of a trumpet calling to arms was never heard and the voice of the warrior was silent. It was a kingdom where strife was found not, where wealth could never enter, where Lazarus was richer than Dives, and the hardy shepherd who tended his flocks alone on Esdraelon was the peer of the king in his purple and fine linen. It was a kingdom where there was neither ceremonial, nor slavery, nor injustice, where broken hearts were healed and weary spirits were at rest.

To all who saw the light, he promised a place in this kingdom which had no foundations in the earth and had ne'er been seen of men; and neither pride, nor vanity, nor riches, nor any greatness of this world, would avail to gain an entrance there. To all who had vain longings he spoke: to all whose hearts were stirred with anger and revenge: to all who had trailed the spirit in the dust of earth. And the multitude marvelled when they learned that a place in His Father's house was not to be won by praising him loudly to the children of men, but by loving him in the virgin silence of the heart, and doing his will. Let them accept the tidings he brought, and though their hearts were overflowing with sorrow, they should be comforted; and though their wandering feet should lead them deep into the Wilderness, or their weary limbs should repose in the far-off tents of Kedar, there would the Father be to lead their steps aright.

And Mary Magdalene still sat apart and looked hungrily at the sea, and she neither saw nor heard. For awhile she had been troubled with fantastic visions that were no part of the prospect, and she had heard awful, storm-like voices in the peaceful twilight. But a change came over her gradually.

Somewhere from out the blessed heavens, it seemed to her, stole a sweet, insistent music. The demon voices were silent. The music rippled on, and Mary listened to it as a delighted child, but her eyes were still vacantly upon the sea. How beautiful it was, yet it was but the music of a voice. And as the sweet tones fell like the footfalls of evening upon her spirit, the storm died out of her forever, the mist cleared from her eyes, and there at her feet she saw frail flowers amid the waving grass, and star-eyed things peeping from the stones. Once more the glory of the sky was unrolled before the soul of Mary Magdalene, once more the beauty of the sea was revealed to her loving sight. And there came upon her an intense longing to see *Him*.

Slowly she arose from her seat. Timidly and with downcast eyes, as one wanders in a dream and dreads the awakening, she approached the multitude, drawn by the Voice. She felt that the music was about to cease, and her eyes longed to see the Truth and the Light.

The crowd involuntarily made way for her, and when the Beautiful Teacher had finished, the Magdalene stood before Him with such yearning in her eyes as he had never seen before. It seemed as if Nature stood still a moment as the Saviour looked at the woman who paused there with uplifted face. Then he contemplated her compassionately, murmured "Peace" so softly that she alone heard it, and the madness had gone as a vanished cloud.

The woman remained a moment as one in an ecstasy, then her plight became apparent to her; and drawing her long dark hair over her breast, she turned swiftly, and glided away like a shadow.

Before many days had passed Mary Magdalene became one of that little band following the Light. She saw, she knew the Master, and from that time forth, doubts and vain longings were not for her. Again she wandered from her home, but the way was no longer in the dark.

She had languished for earthly love, but when she thought she held it next her heart, behold, her arms were empty. She but grasped a shadow.

For a time learning and philosophy had cooled the fever in her brain, and they had seemed the substance of life, but again disappointment, the eternal intruder, had snatched the wan dream from her.

Then came the thirst for glory, and the end of all riotous passions in the ashes of war.

The woman of Magdala was transformed. A divine sweetness filled the urn of life. A muted music was ever in her veins. She looked into the face of humanity, and loved it with a tenderness that sanctified her own spirit. Towards every maimed and bruised thing her swift sympathy went out. Self had died within her and all the desires that writhed about it.

But there came a time when the Light was enveloped in thick shadow, and there were many timid souls that fain would say that it had been quenched forever. A great desolation fell upon the heart of Mary, but even in the darkest night, she could see the silver fringes of the light, and her faith never faltered. A great pain was upon her all the while, the pain of a tender sympathy for the shrouded light, but her faith had refined her spirit, and so she was the first ordained to see the breaking day.

Just as from the dead driven sand unified by the Spirit of Nature emerges the perfect opal, dreaming its way from darkness to light, a concentrated miracle of dazzling color, so from the dead self of Mary Magdalene there grew the rare flower of perfect love whose perfume cannot die.





HERE is no night so cold but that it holds in its heart the essence of fire. No space is so distant that it may not be pervaded with heat. Light lurks in every crevice of the Universe, and Divinity knows no boundaries. Before the vision of the Soul shone an orb of the Divine Light, whose soft and unescapable influence made the parting with the passions a serene and exalted surrender; and so the Soul became a manifestation of the Divine tenderness to the flying generations of man.

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